

# STUDY PROJECT

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A PROPOSED MILITARY STRATEGY FOR THE WAR ON DRUGS

BY

LIEUTENANT COLONEL WARREN KURTZ, JR.

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A PROPOSED MILITARY STRATEGY FOR THE WAR ON DRUGS

AN INDIVIDUAL STUDY PROJECT

by

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## ABSTRACT

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— The current "War on Drugs" is the response to the endemic problem of illegal narcotic trafficking in the United States. This problem has taken on monumental proportions due to the vast amounts of money received by the narco-traffickers and the violence they have displayed. The number of individuals in society that use drugs is increasing thereby, reducing overall productivity of the nation. The Congress of the United States overwhelmingly passed H.R. 5210 in Oct 1988. This bill contains numerous initiatives, one of which is assigning the Department of Defense as the lead agency for surveillance and detection of narcotics trafficking. Thus, bringing the military further into this unconventional war. Considering the problem is a demand problem what, if anything, can the military do. Attacking the supply would only raise the price. The process of stopping the flow of narcotics into the country could jeopardize the free commerce of legitimate international trade. This study examines the military involvement in the Drug War in relation the elements of national power. Further, this study recommends a strategy to employ the military in the drug war with a mission that it is capable of performing.

*Keywords: Law enforcement; military*

*Abstract - (17) —*

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# A PROPOSED MILITARY STRATEGY FOR THE WAR ON DRUGS

## CHAPTER I INTRODUCTION

The objective is to examine the "War on Drugs" and develop a strategy that will employ the military in an effective and coordinated manner in this war. Coming up with all of the answers to eliminate illegal drug use in the United States is an impossible task. No answer will be complete because the problem is not entirely understood. The real issue is how do we modify the behavior of the users. It is a demand problem not a supply problem. Historically, employment of military might considers the concepts of the ways, means and ends of directing force upon force. The major question is where does the military fit into this "War"? We cannot direct military force against behavior.

The scope of the problem in terms of the statistics, legislation and dispersion of mission in the agencies to respond to this epidemic is almost beyond comprehension. The Department of Defense has been designated as the lead agency for detection and surveillance in the counter drug campaign. Therefore, a strategy must be articulated so that DOD efforts will be focused and proactive. Without this focus, a continuation of the present

disjointed (albeit well intentioned) activities will continue to produce minimal results.

This study projects a means for determining military involvement in the War on Drugs. But first, several questions must be answered about concepts that have been only vaguely and loosely applied to the drug issue. Before we begin we must agree that this issue is multifarious. Therefore, we must consider several working assumptions.

### THE CHALLENGE

Each part of the drug problem -- production, transportation, and use -- presents it's own subset of variables. If we could consider each of the many subsets with corresponding variables as a small dot on a sheet of paper, there would be hundreds of points scattered across the paper. The next step would be to instruct someone to connect the dots in any fashion they saw fit. Then at the end of this procedure a completely different picture would emerge for each person that completes the exercise. If we extend this metaphor to the drug problem, the picture is drawn on sand paper, so the lines themselves are not clear. The actions necessary to correct the illegal drug usage are in the eye of the craftsman. The craftsmen in the counter narcotics issue are the President, the Congress, the agencies with both direct and indirect involvement, the American people and the international community.<sup>1</sup>

The strategy offered in this study is very simple. By

convention, a strategy is forward looking, simple and proactive. This proposition is not merely to articulate a continuance of present operations. Rather, to advocate coordination of all activities and agencies involved in the "Drug War" to the end of denying the drug barons freedom to move their goods as they see fit. The command, control, communications and intelligence (C3I) activities required to accomplish this are obvious military capabilities. In the Clausewitzian tradition, "Everything in strategy is very simple, but that does not mean that everything is very easy".<sup>2</sup>

## CHAPTER II

### WHAT IS OUR NATIONAL INTEREST?

Arguably, the most difficult concept to grasp is our national interest. Within our democratic process, the continued friction between the people, the Congress, the President, special interest groups and the international community serves to evoke expression of American national interests. The process of articulating these policies is as difficult as the process to develop them.

In National Security Policy Formulation: Institutions, Processes and Issues, James Dixon offers an understanding of these dynamic and sometimes frustrating proceedings.

But underlying all that is an even more basic challenge: to reconcile divergent perspectives on central societal values and purposes and, where reconciliation cannot be accomplished, to choose among them. Most readers will have sensed this already in their own observations of the decision

making process. Arguments often seem to contend against one another mainly at the level of choice about means-which national tools to develop or use. But inevitably, there is an even deeper, if unarticulated, divergence about the ends of decisions, national purpose and priorities....It is most fundamentally an argument about the societal goals and values that must be served by those instruments and about how to choose among them when they seem to pull in different directions.<sup>3</sup>

The American people seek to conduct a "War on Drugs". The purpose of this "War" is to eliminate the use of illegal drugs within the country.<sup>4</sup> Numerous statistics have detailed the ruined lives, high crime rate, and violent nature of the traffickers. Sadly, the statistics indicate that we are continually losing ground to this insidious epidemic.<sup>5</sup> Congress has mandated increased military involvement to fight this problem. The overwhelming passage of H.R. 5210 demonstrated congressional determination to fight a war that would win back the morality of the society. This Public Law assigns DOD as the lead agency for detection and monitoring of aerial and maritime transit of illegal drugs into the United States. Now that the military is more directly involved, so the logic goes, we can beat the enemy by stopping the flow of drugs into the country. The logic is sound, but the impact of DOD involvement alone will not stem the tide of illegal drug usage. The military is a potent force capable of projecting a staggering level of power in a global scenario. But, the military cannot, indeed should not, seal the borders and lock up every drug user that is apprehended. Again, we must remember, the issue is the use of the drugs within our society.



The issue of illegal narcotics and its impact on society can be evaluated by studying this problem in relation to the various elements of national power. To understand the role of the military in these areas, we need to visit this chart so that we can understand how this relationship determines the function of the military.<sup>6</sup> Figure 1 depicts the military as having a very close relationship with the economic, socio-psychological and political elements of power. This relationship, with its numerous inputs and overlapping interests from all of the elements, is not clearly defined, only associative. The extent of influence of these factors upon each other presents the complication. Solving the problem entails focusing the efforts of these elements towards the factors they influence. These elements combine into our national will, so the military must be involved in the counter drug program to the extent of it's relationship with the other elements. Figure 1 outlines the broad scope of factors that constitute the shaping of national power. The use of the military in the drug war must be regarded in the complex of national power. National Security Decision Directive 221 states that this problem is a threat to our national security and there is a discernable enemy. Thus there should be little argument about the employment of military forces.

### CHAPTER III

#### MILITARY INTEREST AND MILITARY RESOLVE

Military involvement in a drug war is not a crowd-pleaser at the Pentagon.<sup>7</sup> Opinions in military circles range from the skeptical to the downright disagreeable when military action in this "War" is proposed. The arguments against using DOD resources are very strong: First, the real problem is demand, not supply. Drug abuse is a domestic issue. Military involvement in domestic affairs has been historically limited and in many cases specifically restricted by law. The American military has always maintained an appropriate distance from domestic issues. Second, the military should only be used when there is a threat to national security. Third, the military is not equipped or trained to conduct the appropriate operations. Fourth, the military should not be detracted from its traditional missions of defense against armed foreign enemies. Last and most important, since the military is to be involved, then it needs to be assigned a mission that it is capable of performing -- a mission appropriate to its structure.

Several variations of these reservations have been expressed, but these are the foundations for the apprehension exhibited by the military. Additionally, the "War on Drugs" does not qualify as a war by the traditional definition. Therefore, how does the military participate? To date, we have not developed a strategy that really calls upon the capabilities of the military in the counter drug crusade. This lack of strategy

means that there is no direction or focus to bring the military might to bear on the problem.

Obviously, there has been considerable military activity in countering narcotics traffic. The U.S. Coast Guard, although not a DOD asset, has been intensely involved in aerial and maritime interdiction for many years.<sup>8</sup> The Air Force, Army and Navy have loaned equipment and personnel to federal and state law enforcement agencies as a multiplier of effort for effective law enforcement. These tactical level operations have been impressive, but they have produced only sporadic effects.

The military cannot be faulted for a reluctance in being involved in countering the drug epidemic. Many agencies in local, state and federal governments are involved in some aspect of the drug problem. They are having difficulty dealing with the issue. Any agency's organization, mission, structure, culture, size and budget will dictate the extent of its involvement. There is really no lack of desire to attack the problem. The problem is how to coordinate the efforts of the diverse government organizations.<sup>9</sup>

Some members of the military believe that DOD is being made the lead agency for detection and interdiction only as a political move to placate the public. There may be some truth to this position. Congress, in so many words, has stated "Look at all this money we have given to you and you can't stop a few airplanes from entering the country. Further, if you can't stop drug traffic then how can you defend us from our enemies?"<sup>10</sup> The

military has been trained and equipped to respond to the threat at the high end of the conflict spectrum. But drug traffic presents a threat in the low to mid range of intensity. Thus, no one envisions that either the M-1 tank or the B-2 bomber would play a key role narcotics interdiction.

Yet, the dilemma remains that if any progress is to be made in dealing with the supply side of the equation, then who is more capable of accomplishing the tasks than the military? The Drug Enforcement Agency is building a small army to conduct operations in South America, and the Customs Service is now flying P-3 Orions for aerial surveillance.<sup>11</sup> These actions may be necessary, but they represent a large duplication of effort. The mission for the military is to coordinate the detection and surveillance activities not to knock down doors with M-1 tanks.

Without a doubt, the leadership at The Department of Defense is very concerned about narcotics usage. The military has the responsibility to defend the nation, but it must be reluctant to demonstrate obsequious behavior that is not in the best interests of the nation. The senior leadership in the military are very aware that the future manpower for the services will come from this same population that will also provide the industrial capacity to deter a major threat to our security. This leadership realizes that you will have a difficult time defending the nation drawing upon a population of drug users.

The one significant difference between general government agencies and The Department of Defense is that the military is

capable of operating on three levels: the strategic, the operational and the tactical. Strategic planning provides the focus for action by defining the centers of gravity within the problem. Operational level activities allocate the resources and assign the tasks directed toward these centers of gravity. Tactical actions carry out those tasks. DOD capability to conduct operations on all three levels could successfully address the supply side of the problem.

The Omnibus drug bill H.R. 5210 has designated DOD as the lead agency for detection and surveillance. This is a military mission and it provides many opportunities and numerous additional benefits. First, with DOD as the proponent for the detection and interdiction, coordination activities fit nicely into the development of a C3I capability that has been overlooked for years. With the real possibility of a drastic reduction in our active duty forces because of anticipated budget constraints, we need to dramatically increase our ability to gather intelligence and coordinate all of our resources. A reduction of forces, makes it imperative that we have additional time to prepare for any possible confrontation. An effective intelligence program, coupled with the command and control of the resources, would gain the time to either keep an incident at the political-diplomatic level or provide the ability to marshall the appropriate forces. The additional benefit is the capability to gather information in narcotics trafficking.

Second, the military is a very large element in the national

power equation. The military cannot be separated from society which it come from and which it is obliged to serve.

Third, the commitment of the military demonstrates resolve to attack the problem in a proactive stance. Coordination of all forces to stem the tide of illegal narcotics is a worthy cause. It sends a clear message that we are determined to overcome this problem.

#### CHAPTER IV

##### THE NATURE OF THE THREAT

The military has the obligation to reduce the supply of illegal drugs in the United States. To do so, it must first assess the threat to determine what actions would be appropriate. The concept of this "threat" necessitates the visualization of who is the enemy. If an "enemy" is anything capable of systematic destructive effects on society, then widespread drug abuse is an enemy. But, drugs are not a conventional, or even unconventional, military enemy. Certainly, the complex of addictive demand for drugs, freewheeling traffic in drugs, and abundant, multifarious supply of drugs adds up to a very elusive, destructive, and ill defined adversary.<sup>12</sup> The threat is not a direct attack on the nation by military means. It is a subtle and insidious menace to our democratic values.

This threat has both internal and external elements. Internally, it undermines our socio-psychological fiber. It extends outward through the economic tentacles that reallocate

wealth to the criminal element. It is expressed in the reduction of productivity by the users who are unable to work at their full potential. Further, the society is at risk when the users are in positions that effect public safety.

The external threat is manifested through the destabilization of world order. Narco-terrorism has pushed several countries to near collapse. The drug barons have virtually replaced legitimate governments with a perverted drug based economy.<sup>13</sup>

## CHAPTER V

### STRATEGY

The requirement to develop a military strategy or a strategy for the military to operate in the "War on Drugs" is an absolute necessity. Strategy determines that the activities that attack the problem are focused, concise, simple and, above all, achievable.

In the essence of Clausewitz, strategy does not provide a road map to an exact location. Rather, it indicates a direction, as the compass does. If you are traveling in the right direction, then you will arrive at the desired location. If you follow a map in the strategic level of thinking, you may get lost during the journey because you can't see over the next obstacle. The specific route of march for the forces can only be defined in an operational level campaign plan.

Strategy is based on capabilities, not on limitations.

Strategy sets your goals, and it predetermines a successful outcome.<sup>14</sup> It allows you to visualize what victory you can accept.

The formulation of a strategy provides a way of thinking. It is dictated by the nature of the opposition, not the way we do things now. The dimensions of this conflict are unknown.<sup>15</sup> This conflict could be measured by numerous standards. It could be measured by the number of drug related deaths each year. It could be quantified by the number of individuals in prison on drug related charges. It may be measured by economic means: the real value of the narcotics on the street or the Drug Enforcement Agency could estimate the value of the confiscated drugs in wholesale value. But we should be cautious, because these measures detract from the real issue. When we attempt to establish the framework to attack the problem, a score card may be required to satisfy the many spectators. But the strategic proposition is to force the traffickers to conform to our intentions which is to control them -- not merely to keep score.

Clausewitz suggests that a strategy is the nexus of the activities that attack the "centers of gravity". The National Drug Policy Board, with concurrence and support of the President, has determined that the counter drug operations include attacking production, transportation and use. These activities have been further refined into more specific functions that focus on these activities. These functions include education, eradication, interdiction, investigation, rehabilitation, and punishment.



Articulation of these functions by the National Drug Policy Board into the actions that attack them establishes our national counter narcotics policy.<sup>16</sup> From a national perspective this is a logical approach. But these areas are not strictly military functions, even though interdiction can be considered appropriate for military operations. If we determine that the proverbial "fog of conflict" can be diminished, we should be able to provide the additional refinement of these functions for strategic level initiatives.

We speak of the ends, ways and means of countering the threat. Since the military is charged with countering the supply than a strategy must be articulated that could focus the efforts.

## CHAPTER VI

### THE MILITARY STRATEGY FOR THE WAR ON DRUGS

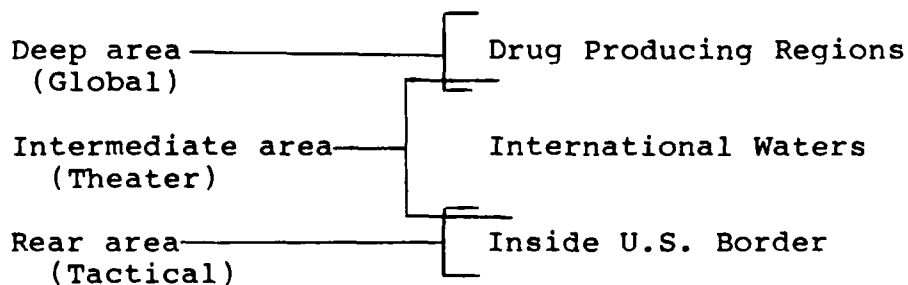
The military role in the drug war is to detect and provide surveillance for the production and transportation of the narcotics. This mission would be a total success when the C3I system is able to detect all incoming shipments of illegal drugs. The military may not be able to confiscate the supplies outside of the borders. But it will be able to pass the intelligence on to the appropriate agency which would then be able to confiscate the drugs inside of the country. The recommended military strategy for the war on drugs is:

**To channelize the flow of drugs entering the  
country so that law enforcement officials can**

**control the non-interdicted narcotics.**

Does this strategic statement sufficiently define the military's role in the drug war? The process of channelizing the flow of drugs is further defined as the continual and permanent narrowing of options that the trafficker has available to him. Presently, they have considerable freedom to produce and ship their products at will. They are able to evade sporadic efforts at interdiction. This statement admits that the flow of drugs can not be entirely stopped. The intent is to control such activities. Our purpose is to create a way of thinking where each new initiative in the war supports the ends that further restrict production and transportation of drugs. The effect is to deprive the drug barons of options, regardless of the location. Any of his remaining options thus present a higher risk to his operation.

As the proponent for coordination, detection and surveillance activities, DOD must focus strategy on the functions based on the region where the operations are conducted. The framework to coordinate command, control and communication and intelligence activities must be planned in three areas:



Depending on the region, coordination of activities will

bring together the necessary agencies. For example, in the deep areas the CIA, DIA, State Department and the CINC will develop a campaign plan appropriate for the region. In the rear area, the players will include the FBI, local law enforcement agencies, and the DEA--with FORSCOM providing the C3I activities. The governors' plans should detail their states requirements; no doubt they will request support from the active duty installations in the respective locations. Overall planning must eliminate overlapping and disjointed operations.

All DOD assets will serve to deny the drug trafficker the freedom to move his product at will. Along the southern border, observation balloons have successfully aided this strategy. But the balloons do not stop the drugs brought in by illegal immigrants carrying it in their back packs. However, they do deny the airspace for low flying aircraft from 200 feet above the surface and higher. Once the southern border of the United States is secure, then we must develop and implement the technology to track small boats that carry the drugs to shore from the ships. Technological advances may become the key to many of the problems. The same technology that would protect us from submarine launched cruise missiles would also detect the aerial transportation of narcotics. The key is that all efforts must support the strategy to continually and permanently narrow the traffickers options.

We must increase restrictions on production and deny routes of transfer of the narcotics. Progress toward victory can be

assessed by tallying routes that have been denied traffickers. Such progress will not come in a dramatic fashion. It will come slowly and most likely will entail considerable patience on the part of all participants. We must be prepared to endure.

## CHAPTER VII

### CONCLUSION

If we can consider our crusade against illegal drug usage a war, then the military has a part to play. Given the tremendous capability of both the organization and equipment, coupled with focused effort, the supply of drugs into this country can be reduced by military actions. This war is going to be a protracted low-intensity conflict. The drug traffickers are smart, but they are greedy. So they can be beaten. For domestic narcotics, the military assistance to law enforcement officials will multiply their effects many times. A coordinated intelligence effort will provide personnel in the field with information necessary to enhance our efforts. So the military should take a proactive stance, the military can help accomplish the task. But this takes planning on the strategic level and establishing focus for the operational level. The operational level of this war requires us to develop all actions that support the effort to channelize the flow of drugs entering our society. With interdiction efforts focused to develop choke points for routes used by the drug traffickers, then the supply can be contained. Victory in the war is a drug-free America. Mission accomplishment for the military is the denial of unrestricted

access to the market by the traffickers.

## ENDNOTES

1. Ronald Reagan, National Security Strategy of The United States, p. 26.
2. Carl Von Clausewitz, On War, p. 178.
3. James H. Dixon, National Security Policy Formulation: Institutions, Processes and Issues, p. 215.
4. GAO--National Drug Policy Board, Leadership Evolving Greater Role in Developing Budgets Possible, p. 8.
5. Raymond L. Hogler, Substance Abuse in the Work Place, p. 23.
6. Arthur F. Lykke Jr. War, National Policy and Strategy, Core Curriculum, Course 2, U.S. Army War College, AY 89, p. 5.
7. John Dillin, "Congress Drafts Military to Battle Drug Traffickers," Christian Science Monitor (Washington), 23 Mar 1989, p. 1.
8. GAO Drug Smuggling, Large Amounts of Illegal Drugs not Seized by Federal Authorities, p. 4.
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12. Steven Wisotosky, Breaking the impasse in the War on Drugs, p. 117.
13. Ibid., p. 156.
14. Commission on Integrated Long Term Strategy, "Sources of Change in the Future Security Environment," p. 20.
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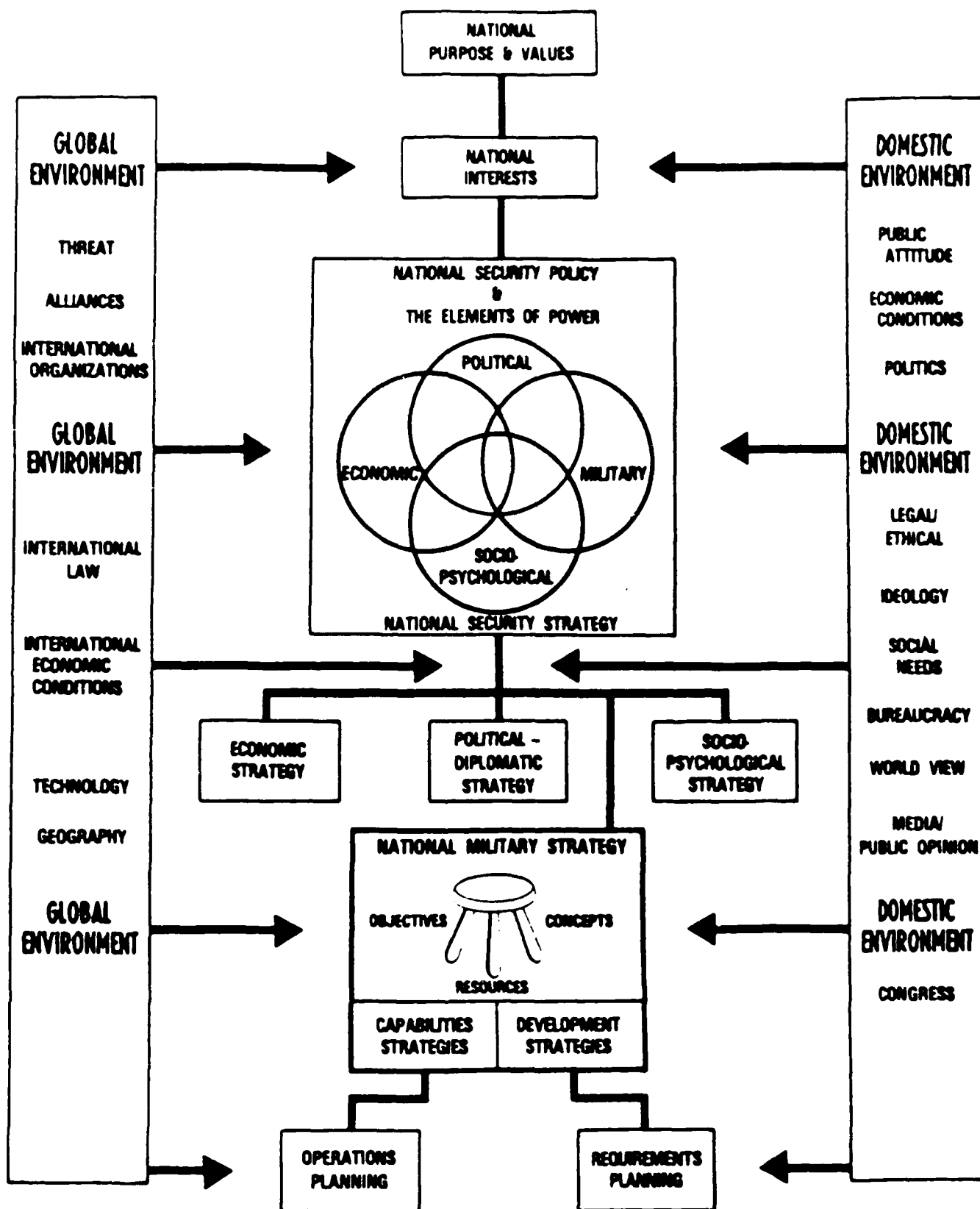


FIGURE 1